Contamination of water sources

567. SHRI RAMA MUNI REDDY SIRIGIREDDY: Will the Minister of WATER RESOURCES be pleased to state:

(a) whether West Bengal is worst hit by arsenic and flouride contamination of drinking water sources;

(b) the measures taken by Government to assist the State Government to solve this problem; and

(c) the fund allocated or proposed to be allocated for the said purpose?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF WATER RESOURCES (SHRI JAI PRAKASH NARAYAN YADAV): (a) Out of 341 Nos. of blocks in 18 districts in the State of West Bengal, 79 blocks in 8 districts and 45 blocks in 9 districts are affected by the problem of arsenic and fluoride contamination in ground water respectively.

(b) and (c) Rural drinking water is a State subject. Government of India, extends financial and technical assistance to States for supply of safe drinking water in rural areas through a Centrally Sponsored Accelerated Rural Water Supply Programme (ARWSP). Funds amounting to Rs. 63.95 crore have been released to West Bengal Government so far during the current year under ARWSP. 15% of ARWSP funds have been exclusively earmarked for Sub Mission project for tackling water quality problems. With effect from 01.04.1998, the power to sanction Sub Mission projects have been delegated to States. The Central Ground Water Board (CGWB), under the Ministry of Water Resources has also constructed 65 exploratory tubewelis in four arsenic affected districts to delineate arsenic free aquifer zones. Successful wells have been handed over to State Government for use. Assistance of Rs. 12.02 lakhs for artificial recharge scheme and Rs. 21.00 lakhs in connection with R&D scheme has been provided by CGWB/Ministry of Water Resources. One mobile laboratory van with inbuilt equipment for instant analysis of arsenic rich ground water has also been made available to the State.

Division of Water Resources between India and Bangladesh

568. SHRIMATI KAMLA MANHAR: Will the Minister of WATER RESOURCES be pleased to state:

(a) whether recently an Indian delegation had visited Bangladesh and held talks with Bangladesh authorities about division of water resources between the two countries;